

Community Approaches to Toxic Stress



National Child Abuse and Neglect
Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center

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Presenters

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Shifting the Conversation about Toxic Stress

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- There is a growing understanding of the impact of stress on human brain development.
- Toxic stress results from unrelenting and unbuffered stress and can cause lifelong suffering.
- The conversation needs to be about more than understanding and intervening.
- It's equally important to
 - tackle root causes of toxic stress.
 - help parents and caregivers buffer their children from toxic stress responses.
 - build protective factors in families and communities.
- Community-level strategies are needed to support families, reduce and address adversity, and promote healing.

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WORKING TOWARD Well-Being COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO TOXIC STRESS

An issue brief from the Early Childhood-LINC Learning Lab on Community Approaches to Toxic Stress convened by the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

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About the Early Childhood-LINC Learning Lab on Community Approaches to Toxic Stress

Early Childhood-LINC is a learning and innovation network for communities—a network of communities that have come together with CSSP to demonstrate effective approaches to developing local early childhood systems. Together, the participating communities tackle tough problems, test new solutions, and accelerate progress toward ensuring that all young children and their families thrive.

Learning labs are a process by which leaders from Early Childhood-LINC communities

In recent years, significant attention has been paid to the concept of toxic stress and the impact of adverse experiences in childhood on lifelong health and development. As scientific understanding continues to grow, community leaders are searching for ways to prevent and respond to toxic stress in the lives of young children and their families as part of their broader efforts to achieve healthy development and well-being for all children. Leaders from six communities worked together in 2015 with the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) through its the Early Childhood-LINC Learning Lab on Community Approaches to Toxic Stress (see sidebar) to learn from each other's experiences, discuss the challenges and opportunities they face and generate ideas to improve the response to toxic stress in their own communities and in others.

This issue brief distills the experiences and recommendations of leaders from these six communities and from CSSP. It provides:



- A definition of toxic stress from a community perspective
- A framework for a community

A Framework for a Community Approach to Toxic Stress

Agents for Change within a Community System

Parents and caregivers organize to:

- Develop strategies to prevent and respond to stressors in their families and communities
- Learn, develop and share strategies to respond to the impact of toxic stress in their children and families
- Develop leadership skills and partner with program, system and community leaders

Providers work to:

- Build awareness of the impact of toxic stress
- Develop and implement strategies to promote healthy development and prevent stress for both parents and children
- Effectively screen and assess to identify needs for services
- Build capacity to respond to intensive needs with appropriate services and referrals

Multisystem, community partners and policymakers coordinate their efforts to:

- Engage all sectors of the community in supporting families
- Support programmatic changes
- Ensure an array of services/supports are available
- Promote policies, practices and techniques that mitigate stress and promote healthy development
- Reduce or eliminate root causes of toxic stress in the community

Community Context

Parents and other caregivers have opportunities to:

- Understand effects of toxic stress
- Learn/implement positive parenting strategies
- Make decisions for their families and communities

An aligned set of formal and informal, effective services, interventions and opportunities are available for children and adults.

Service providers recognize and respond appropriately to symptoms of toxic stress.

Other community entities are family-friendly and trauma-informed.

Protective factors are robust in families and communities.



Individual & Family Experiences

Children grow up in a rich environment of positive experiences.

Children have minimal exposure to severe and/or prolonged stress.

Parents and other adults provide buffering to prevent a toxic stress response.

Children and adults receive appropriate support for toxic stress experienced.



Outcomes

Healthy Development

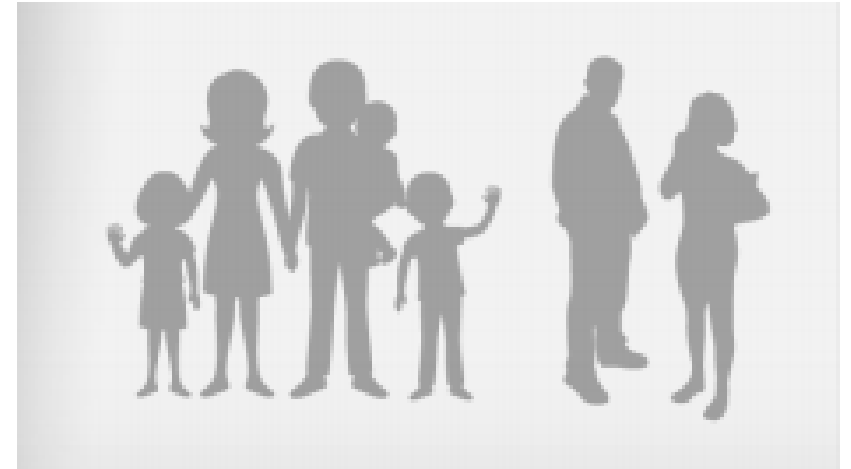
Children and families thrive



Parents as Agents for Change

Parents and caregivers organize to:

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- Learn, develop and share strategies to respond to the impact of toxic stress in their children and families
- Develop leadership skills and partner with program, system and community leaders

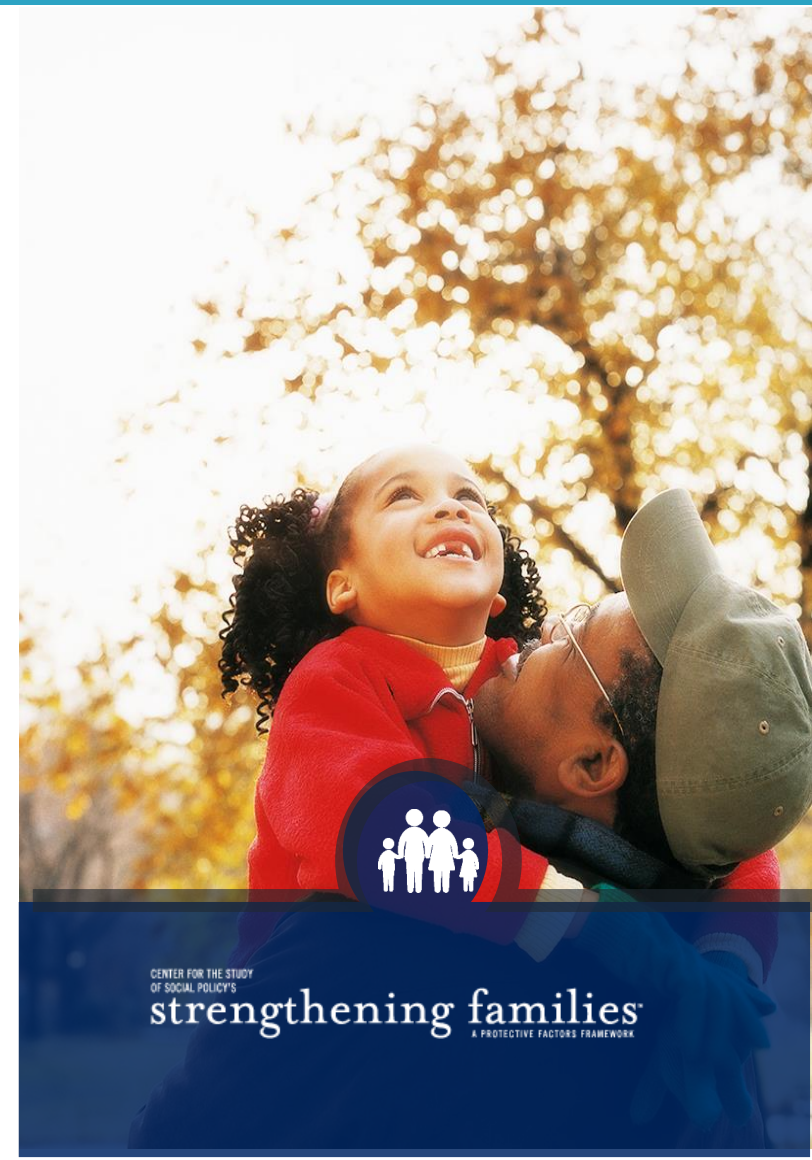


Strengthening Families: Protective Factors

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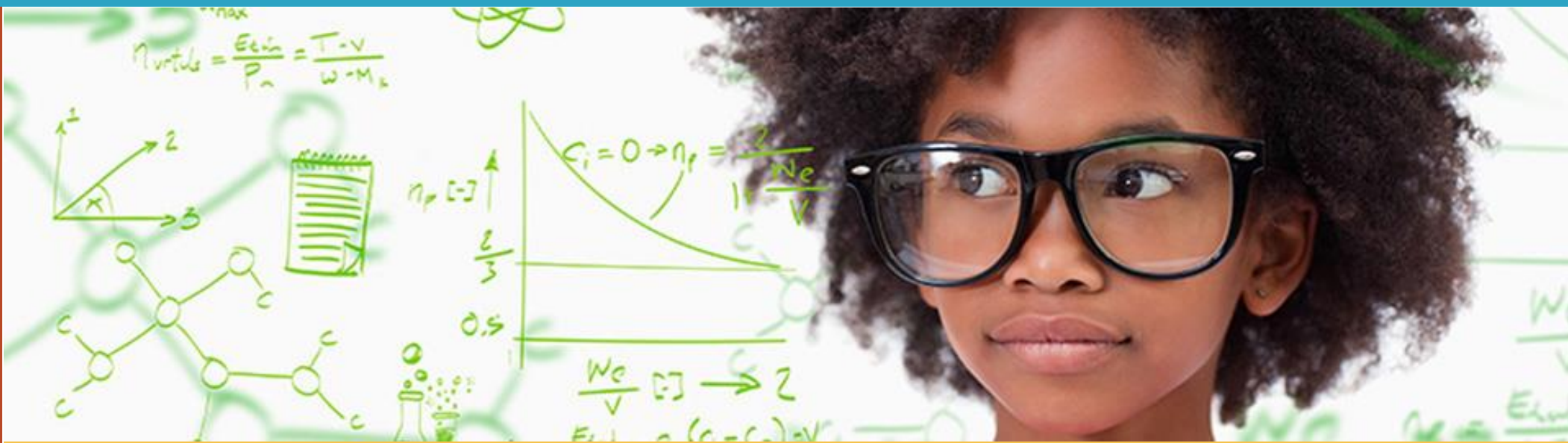
-  Parental Resilience
-  Social Connections
-  Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
-  Concrete Support in Times of Need
-  Social and Emotional Competence of Children

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Upcoming Prevention Month Digital Dialogues

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- Building Public Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention April 5
- Family Support and Strengthening Networks and Quality Work with Families April 11
- Powerful Strategies for Strong Families and Communities: Children's Trust Funds and Their Contributions to Well-Being Across the U.S. April 19

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Thank You & Next Steps

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- Download the handouts to learn more. Click on the files in the “Handouts” box on your screen.
- Do you have innovative ideas, questions or concerns about community engagement? Tell us about your work. Send an e-mail to hello@CANTASD.org with “Community Engagement” in the subject line.
- Participate in our Prevention Month Digital Dialogue series. Go to www.CANTASD.org.

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